

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. A method of increasing a quantity of differentiable programming content available in a digital programming transmission stream comprising:
 creating a plurality of digital programming components, the plurality of digital programming components utilizing a bandwidth of the digital programming transmission stream less than or equal to a bandwidth normally allocated for a
10 standard digital programming segment, wherein the standard digital programming segment is a unit of differentiable programming content;
 defining at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components to comprise at least one component programming segment, wherein the at least one component programming segment is also a unit of differentiable
15 programming content; and
 inserting at least the at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components into the digital programming transmission stream;
 wherein, without increasing the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, the quantity of differentiable programming content
20 available in the digital programming transmission stream is able to be increased by the number of units of differentiable programming content corresponding to the at least one component programming segment.
- 25 2. A method of providing an increased quantity of differentiable programming content in a programming transmission system, the differentiable programming content transmitted via a digital programming transmission stream, to a plurality of users, the method comprising:
 synchronizing a plurality of digital programming components, the plurality of digital programming components utilizing a bandwidth of the digital programming transmission stream less than or equal to a bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, wherein the standard digital programming segment is a unit of differentiable programming content;
 defining at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components to comprise at least one component programming segment, wherein the at least one component programming segment is also a unit of differentiable
30 programming content;
 inserting the at least one subset of digital programming components into the digital programming transmission stream; and
 transmitting the digital programming transmission stream to the plurality of

users;

- wherein, without increasing the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, the quantity of differentiable programming content transmitted in the digital programming transmission stream is able to be increased by
- 5 the number of units of differentiable programming content corresponding to the at least one component programming segment.

3. A method of receiving an increased quantity of differentiable programming content in a programming transmission system, the differentiable
- 10 programming content received by at least one user via a digital programming transmission stream, the method comprising:

receiving a plurality of synchronized digital programming components in the digital programming transmission stream, the plurality of digital programming components utilizing a bandwidth of the digital programming transmission stream less than or equal to a bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, wherein the standard digital programming segment is a unit of differentiable

15 programming content; and

selecting for presentation at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components, the at least one subset comprising at least one component programming segment, wherein the at least one component programming segment is also a unit of differentiable programming content;

wherein, without increasing the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, the quantity of differentiable programming content received in the digital programming transmission stream is able to be increased by the

25 number of units of differentiable programming content corresponding to the at least one component programming segment.

4. A method for creating differentiable programming content, wherein a quantity of differentiable programming content available for transmission in a digital
- 30 programming transmission stream is increased, the method comprising:

creating a plurality of digital programming components, the plurality of digital programming components utilizing a bandwidth of the digital programming transmission stream less than or equal to a bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, wherein the standard digital programming

35 segment is a unit of differentiable programming content;

synchronizing the plurality of digital programming components; and

defining at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components to comprise at least one component programming segment, wherein the at least one component programming segment is also a unit of differentiable

programming content;

wherein, without increasing the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, the quantity of differentiable programming content available for transmission in the digital programming transmission stream is able to be
5 increased by the number of units of differentiable programming content corresponding to the at least one component programming segment.

5. A method as described in claim 1 further comprising inserting the plurality of digital programming components into the digital programming
10 transmission stream.

6. A method as described in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components replaces the standard digital programming segment in the digital programming transmission stream.

15 7. A method as described in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components is inserted into the digital programming transmission stream in addition to the standard digital programming segment.

20 8. A method as described in claim 5 wherein the plurality of digital programming components replaces the standard digital programming segment in the digital programming transmission stream.

25 9. A method as described in claim 5 wherein the plurality of digital programming components is inserted into the digital programming transmission stream in addition to the standard digital programming segment.

30 10. A method as described in claim 7 wherein the standard digital programming segment is reduced in quality and therefore utilizes less than the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment.

35 11. A method as described in claim 9 wherein the standard digital programming segment is reduced in quality and therefore utilizes less than the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment.

12. A method as described in claim 3 wherein the plurality of digital programming components replaces the standard digital programming segment in the digital programming transmission stream.

13. A method as described in claim 3 wherein the plurality of digital programming components is received in the digital programming transmission stream in addition to the standard digital programming segment.

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14. A method as described in claim 13 wherein the standard digital programming segment is reduced in quality and therefore utilizes less than the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment.

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15. A method as described in claim 1, claim 2, claim 3, or claim 4 wherein the plurality of digital programming components are selected from the group consisting of: video, still-frame video, audio, graphics, text, animation, and media objects.

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16. A method as described in claim 15 wherein the still-frame video comprises scalable video frames.

17. A method as described in claim 15 wherein the audio comprises less than CD-quality audio.

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18. A method as described in claim 1, claim 2, or claim 4 further comprising digitally compressing the plurality of digital programming components.

19. A method as described in claim 3 further comprising digitally decompressing the plurality of digital programming components.

20. A method as described in claim 1 wherein the digital programming transmission stream is carried over a transmission medium selected from the group consisting of: terrestrial television broadcast, cable, satellite, microwave, radio, telephony, wireless telephony, digital subscriber line, fiber optic, a personal communications network, and a communication network.

21. A method as described in claim 2 wherein the digital programming transmission stream is transmitted over a transmission medium selected from the group consisting of: terrestrial television broadcast, cable, satellite, microwave, radio, telephony, wireless telephony, digital subscriber line, fiber optic, a personal communications network, and a communication network.

22. A method as described in claim 3 wherein the digital programming

transmission stream is received over a transmission medium selected from the group consisting of: terrestrial television broadcast, cable, satellite, microwave, radio, telephony, wireless telephony, digital subscriber line, fiber optic, a personal communications network, and a communication network.

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23. A method as described in claim 20, claim 21, or claim 22 wherein the communication network is selected from the group consisting of: the Internet, an intranet, a local area network, a wide area network, a public network, and a private network.

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24. A method as described in claim 1, claim 2, claim 3, or claim 4 wherein the differentiable programming content comprises advertising programming content.

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25. A method as described in claim 1, claim 2, claim 3, or claim 4 wherein the differentiable programming content comprises programming content selected from the group consisting of: news, sports, entertainment, situation comedy, music video, game show, movie, drama, educational programming, interactive video gaming, and live programming.

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26. A method as described in claim 1 further comprising synchronizing the plurality of digital programming components.

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27. A method as described in claim 1 further comprising targeting the at least one component programming segment toward at least one of a plurality of users receiving the digital programming transmission stream.

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28. A method as described in claim 2 further comprising targeting the at least one component programming segment toward at least one of the plurality of users to provide particular differentiable programming content to the at least one of the plurality of users.

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29. A method as described in claim 28 wherein the at least one component programming segment is targeted toward the at least one of the plurality of users based upon user profile information of the at least one of the plurality of users accessible by the programming transmission system.

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30. A method as described in claim 3 further comprising determining whether the at least one component programming segment is targeted toward the at least one user to provide particular differentiable programming content to the at least

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one user, and wherein the step of selecting is based upon a determination that the at least one component programming segment is targeted toward the at least one user.

31. A method as described in claim 30 further comprising accessing user profile information of the at least one user to determine whether the at least one component programming segment is targeted toward the at least one user based upon the user profile information of the at least one user.

32. A method as described in claim 3 further comprising outputting the at least one component programming segment to a presentation device for presentation to the at least one user.

33. A method as described in claim 3 further comprising switching from a first of the at least one component programming segment to a second of the at least one component programming segment.

34. A method as described in claim 33 further comprising outputting the first and second of the at least one component programming segment in sequence to a presentation device for presentation to the at least one user, and wherein the step of switching is seamless, whereby the switch is performed without a delay perceptible by the at least one user between presentation of the first of the at least one component programming segment and presentation of the second of the at least one component programming segment on the presentation device.

35. A method as described in claim 32 or claim 34 wherein the presentation device comprises a device selected from the group consisting of: television, radio, video tape player, audio tape player, digital video disk player, compact digital disk player, minidisk player, digital file player, video game player, computer, personal digital assistant device, telephone, wireless telephone, and a telephony device for the deaf.

36. A system for providing an increased quantity of differentiable programming content in a programming transmission system, the differentiable programming content transmitted via a digital programming transmission stream, to a plurality of users, the system comprising:

an encoder that interleaves a plurality of synchronized digital programming components, wherein at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components comprises at least one component programming segment, and the at least one component programming segment is a unit of differentiable programming

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content; and

a transmitter that transmits the plurality of digital programming components in the digital programming transmission stream to the plurality of users, the plurality of digital programming components utilizing a bandwidth of the digital programming

- 5 transmission stream less than or equal to a bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, wherein the standard digital programming segment is also a unit of differentiable programming content;

wherein, without increasing the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, the quantity of differentiable programming content

- 10 transmitted in the digital programming transmission stream by the transmitter is able to be increased by the number of units of differentiable programming content corresponding to the at least one component programming segment.

37. A system for receiving an increased quantity of differentiable

- 15 programming content in a programming transmission system, the differentiable programming content received by at least one user via a digital programming transmission stream, the system comprising:

a tuner that receives a plurality of synchronized digital programming components in the digital programming transmission stream, the plurality of digital

- 20 programming components utilizing a bandwidth of the digital programming transmission stream less than or equal to a bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, wherein the standard digital programming segment is a unit of differentiable programming content;

- 25 a decoder that separates and selects at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components, the at least one subset comprising at least one component programming segment, wherein the at least one component programming segment is also a unity of differentiable programming content;

- 30 a program output that outputs the at least one component programming segment to a presentation device for presentation of the at least one component programming segment to the at least one user; and

a processor that coordinates and directs the functions of the tuner, the decoder, and the program output;

wherein, without increasing the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, the quantity of differentiable programming content in

- 35 the digital programming transmission stream received by the receiver is able to be increased by the number of units of differentiable programming content corresponding to the at least one component programming segment.

38. A system for providing an increased quantity of differentiable

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programming content in a programming transmission system, the differentiable programming content transmitted via a digital programming transmission stream, to a plurality of users, the system comprising:

- 5 a means for combining a plurality of synchronized digital programming components, wherein at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components comprises at least one component programming segment, and the at least one component programming segment is a unit of differentiable programming content; and
- 10 a means for transmitting the plurality of digital programming components in the digital programming transmission stream to the plurality of users, the plurality of digital programming components utilizing a bandwidth of the digital programming transmission stream less than or equal to a bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, wherein the standard digital programming segment is also a unit of differentiable programming content;
- 15 wherein, without increasing the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, the quantity of differentiable programming content transmitted in the digital programming transmission stream by the transmitting means is able to be increased by the number of units of differentiable programming content corresponding to the at least one component programming segment.
- 20 39. A system for receiving an increased quantity of differentiable programming content in a programming transmission system, the differentiable programming content received by at least one user via a digital programming transmission stream, the system comprising:
 - 25 a means for receiving a plurality of synchronized digital programming components in the digital programming transmission stream, the plurality of digital programming components utilizing a bandwidth of the digital programming transmission stream less than or equal to a bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, wherein the standard digital programming segment is a unit of differentiable programming content;
 - 30 a means for selecting at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components, the at least one subset comprising at least one component programming segment, wherein the at least one component programming segment is also a unit of differentiable programming content;
 - 35 a means for outputting the at least one component programming segment to a means for presenting the at least one component programming segment to the at least one user; and
 - a means for processing that coordinates and directs the functions of the receiving means, the selecting means, and the outputting means;

wherein, without increasing the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, the quantity of differentiable programming content in the digital programming transmission stream received by the receiving means is able to be increased by the number of units of differentiable programming content 5 corresponding to the at least one component programming segment.

40. A system as described in claim 36 wherein the transmitter transmits the plurality of digital programming components in place of the standard digital programming segment in the digital programming transmission stream.
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41. A system as described in claim 38 wherein the transmitting means transmits the plurality of digital programming components in place of the standard digital programming segment in the digital programming transmission stream.

15 42. A system as described in claim 36 wherein the transmitter transmits the plurality of digital programming components in the digital programming transmission stream in addition to the standard digital programming segment.

20 43. A system as described in claim 38 wherein the transmitting means transmits the plurality of digital programming components in the digital programming transmission stream in addition to the standard digital programming segment.

25 44. A system as described in claim 37 wherein the receiver receives the plurality of digital programming components in the digital programming transmission stream in place of the standard digital programming segment.

30 45. A system as described in claim 39 wherein the receiving means receives the plurality of digital programming components in the digital programming transmission stream in place of the standard digital programming segment.

46. A system as described in claim 37 wherein the receiver receives the plurality of digital programming components in the digital programming transmission stream in addition to the standard digital programming segment.

35 47. A system as described in claim 39 wherein the receiving means receives the plurality of digital programming components in the digital programming transmission stream in addition to the standard digital programming segment.

48. A system as described in claim 42, claim 43, claim 46, or claim 47

wherein the standard digital programming segment is reduced in quality and therefore utilizes less than the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment.

5 49. A system as described in claim 36, claim 37, claim 38, or claim 39 wherein the plurality of digital programming components are selected from the group consisting of: video, still-frame video, audio, graphics, text, animation, and media objects.

10 50. A system as described in claim 49 wherein the still-frame video comprises scalable video frames.

15 51. A system as described in claim 49 wherein the audio comprises less than CD-quality audio.

15 52. A system as described in claim 36 further comprising a digital compressor that compresses the plurality of digital programming components before they reach the multiplexer.

20 53. A system as described in claim 38 further comprising a means for digitally compressing the plurality of digital programming components before they reach the combining means.

25 54. A system as described in claim 37 further comprising a digital decompressor that decompresses the plurality of digital programming components, and wherein the processor further coordinates and directs the function of the decompressor.

30 55. A system as described in claim 39 further comprising means for digitally decompressing the plurality of digital programming components, and wherein the processing means further coordinates and directs the function of the decompressing means.

35 56. A system as described in claim 36 further comprising a synchronization component that synchronizes the plurality of digital programming components before they reach the multiplexer.

57. A system as described in claim 38 further comprising a means for synchronizing the plurality of digital programming components before they reach the

combining means.

58. A system as described in claim 36 further comprising a modulator that modulates the multiplexed digital programming components before they reach the transmitter.

5 59. A system as described in claim 38 further comprising a means for modulating the combined digital programming components before they reach the transmitting means.

10 60. A system as described in claim 36 further comprising a memory for storing the plurality of digital programming components before they reach the multiplexer.

15 61. A system as described in claim 38 further comprising a means for storing the plurality of digital programming components before they reach the combining means.

20 62. A system as described in claim 36 further comprising a memory that stores user profile information of the at least one of the plurality of users, wherein the processor further coordinates and directs the function of the memory, and wherein the at least one component programming segment is targeted to the at least one of the plurality of users based upon the user profile information of the at least one of the plurality of users, to provide particular differentiable programming content to the at least one of the plurality of users.

25 63. A system as described in claim 37 wherein the at least one component programming segment is targeted toward the at least one user to provide particular differentiable programming content to the at least one user, and wherein the signal selector further selects the at least one component programming segment based upon information in the at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components that the at least one component programming segment is targeted to the at least one user.

30 64. A system as described in claim 63 further comprising a memory for storing user profile information of the at least one user, wherein the signal selector further selects the at least one component programming segment that is targeted to the at least one user based upon the user profile information of the at least one user.

65. A system as described in claim 36 wherein transmitter transmits the digital programming transmission stream over a transmission medium selected from the group consisting of: terrestrial television broadcast, cable, satellite, microwave, radio, telephony, wireless telephony, digital subscriber line, fiber optic, a personal communications network, and a communication network.

66. A system as described in claim 37 wherein the receiver receives the digital programming transmission stream over a transmission medium selected from the group consisting of: terrestrial television broadcast, cable, satellite, microwave, radio, telephony, wireless telephony, digital subscriber line, fiber optic, a personal communications network, and a communication network.

67. A system as described in claim 65 or claim 66 wherein the communication network is selected from the group consisting of: the Internet, an intranet, a local area network, a wide area network, a public network, and a private network.

68. A system as described in claim 66 further comprising a network connector that provides a connection with the communication network for receiving the plurality of digital programming components from the communication network.

69. A system as described in claim 39 further comprising a means for connecting the receiving means with a communication network, wherein the plurality of digital programming components are received over the communication network.

70. A system as described in claim 36 or claim 37 wherein the differentiable programming content comprises advertising programming content.

71. A system as described in claim 36 or claim 37 wherein the differentiable programming content comprises programming content selected from the group consisting of: news, sports, entertainment, situation comedy, music video, game show, movie, drama, educational programming, interactive video gaming, and live programming.

72. A system as described in claim 37 further comprising a signal switcher that switches from a first of the at least one component programming segment to a second of the at least one component programming segment, and wherein the processor further coordinates and directs the function of the signal switcher.

73. A system as described in claim 72 wherein the switch by the signal switcher is seamless, whereby the switch is performed without a delay perceptible by the at least one user between presentation of the first of the at least one component programming segment and presentation of the second of the at least one component programming segment on the presentation device.

74. A system as described in claim 37 wherein the presentation device comprises a device selected from the group consisting of: television, radio, video tape player, audio tape player, digital video disk player, compact digital disk player, 10 minidisk player, digital file player, video game player, computer, personal digital assistant device, telephone, wireless telephone, and a telephony device for the deaf

75. A computer program product for instructing a computer controlled digital programming reception system with interactive programming technology to 15 select targeted differentiable programming content for a user, the targeted differentiable programming content received at the reception system via a digital programming transmission stream in an increased quantity, the computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer readable program code embodied therein for controlling the programming reception system, the 20 computer readable program code comprising instructions for:

causing the programming reception system to determine whether a plurality of synchronized digital programming components received in the digital programming transmission stream comprises targeted differentiable programming content, wherein the plurality of digital programming components utilize a bandwidth of the digital 25 programming transmission stream less than or equal to a bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital programming segment, wherein the standard digital programming segment is a unit of differentiable programming content;

causing the programming reception system to access information in a user profile about the user;

30 causing the programming reception system to select at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components, the at least one subset comprising at least one component programming segment; wherein the at least one component programming segment is also a unit of differentiable programming content; wherein, without increasing the bandwidth normally allocated for a standard digital

35 programming segment, the quantity of differentiable programming content received in the digital programming transmission stream is able to be increased by the number of units of differentiable programming content corresponding to the at least one component programming segment; and wherein the selection of the at least one subset of the plurality of component programming segments is determined by the

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programming reception system based upon the user profile information of the user to provide targeted differentiable programming content to the user; and
causing the programming reception system to output the at least one component programming segment for presentation to the user on a presentation device.

- 5 76. A computer program product as described in claim 75 wherein the computer readable program code further comprises instructions for:
10 causing the programming reception system to identify a splice point in a first of the at least one component programming segment before the completion of its presentation to the user;
15 causing the programming reception system to select a second of the at least one component programming segment, wherein the selection of the second of the at least one component programming segment is determined by the programming reception system based upon the user profile information of the user ;
20 causing the programming reception system to seamlessly switch from the first at least one of the component programming segment to the second at least one component programming segment at the splice point identified in the first at least one component programming segment; and
25 causing the programming reception system to output the second at least one component programming segment for presentation to the user on the presentation device;
 wherein the switch is accomplished without a delay perceptible by the user between the presentation of the first at least one component programming segment and the presentation of the second at least one component programming segment on the presentation device.

- 30 77. A method of receiving an increased quantity of differentiable advertising segments in a programming transmission system, the differentiable advertising segments received by at least one user via a digital programming transmission stream, the method comprising:
35 receiving a plurality of synchronized digital programming components in the digital programming transmission stream, the plurality of digital programming components utilizing a bandwidth of the digital programming transmission stream less than or equal to a bandwidth normally allocated for a full-motion audio-video segment, wherein the full motion audio-video segment is a unit of differentiable programming content; and
 selecting for presentation at least one subset of the plurality of digital programming components, the selection performed by a processor implementing at

least one command code, the selection based upon packet identification numbers of a plurality of packets comprising the at least one subset, the at least one subset comprising at least one advertising segment, wherein the at least one advertising segment is also a unit of differentiable programming content;

5 wherein, without increasing the bandwidth normally allocated for a full motion audio-video segment, the quantity of differentiable advertising segments received in the digital programming transmission stream is able to be increased by the number of units of differentiable programming content corresponding to the at least one advertising segment.

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78. A method as described in claim 77 wherein the plurality of digital programming components are selected from the group consisting of: video, still-frame video, audio, graphics, text, animation, and media objects.

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79. A method as described in claim 77 wherein the step of receiving further comprises receiving the at least one command code in the digital programming transmission stream.

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80. A method as described in claim 77 further comprising receiving the at least one command code from a user via a user interface.